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## House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. McNULTY).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

July 15, 2008.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL R. McNULTY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

### MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 25 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

### HIGH GAS PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, people are right to be concerned about the impact of high gas prices, diesel fuel, and even though it is summer, soon we'll have to be concerned about home heating oil prices as well. This is hurting everyone from truck drivers to nonprofits, like Meals on Wheels, who are seeing fewer volunteers because they can't afford the gasoline. It is clear that American families are struggling

after years of this administration's failed energy policies. They need help from their political leaders, but most of all, they deserve to be treated honestly.

While it may test well with some focus groups to talk about opening up some of our most fragile and sensitive areas, like the Arctic, for drilling, it fails the more fundamental test of making a difference for our families today or for at least this year. It will take 10 to 20 years before the oil begins to flow from a place like the Arctic, and the benefits will not necessarily be noticed by families even then as we are in a vast global oil market. We hear now that there is a lack of equipment, materials and workers that compounds the problem of getting that oil to flow even if we move forward.

Expanding oil drilling as an answer to the current problems is a hoax because it will not make any difference for years, and even then, it will have so small an impact as to not even be noticed by most people. A difference of 2 cents a gallon in 20 years is little solace for people who are seeing gas prices rise 10 cents in a couple of days and oil prices shooting up \$10 a barrel in a single day. It is a cruel hoax because there are things that can be done now.

An example of something we can do tomorrow which will make a difference immediately would be to release even a small fraction of the oil stored in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. This would squeeze dollars out of the speculative part of the price of oil today. The money from the proceeds of selling this oil could be used to finance badly needed energy and transportation alternatives, and we would still have money left over with which we could continue to fill the Reserve with less expensive oil over time.

There are a series of initiatives that are being examined by the House this week that would rein in oil speculators. I don't know whether it's \$5 or

\$50 a barrel. The experts we hear from conflict, but it's clear that there is some impact. If we stopped wasting taxpayer dollars and eliminated the Hummer tax loophole, which subsidizes the purchase of the largest, heaviest, most expensive gas guzzlers on the road, and instead used that money to make investments, that would help families now.

We can also help immediately by leveling the tax and policy playing field to give American families more choices about how they get around and about how they spend their money on their transportation needs. That's why I've introduced legislation, the Transportation and Housing Choices for Gas Price Relief Act, that recognizes, while there is no single solution to the complex energy situation we are facing, we can immediately reduce the impact of high gas prices on consumers by providing them with real options.

The bill would expand the successful Safe Routes to Schools program, and it would make high schools eligible so children could get to school on their own, burning calories instead of fossil fuel.

It would allow self-employed small businesspeople to get for the first time transit commuting benefits currently enjoyed by other employees of larger businesses. This legislation wouldn't force commuters into a one-size-fits-all solution for their transportation benefits. Instead, it would level the playing field so they could access what works for them.

The bill recognizes that the housing choices that reduce commuting costs sometimes may be a little more expensive, but it results in a legitimate increase in terms of their capacity to purchase a house, and that should be reflected in policy. It promotes telecommuting as well.

It uses current resources better to give people more choices designed to make lives better for Americans today,

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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